Social Media Use and its Impact on Women: A Study of Haryana

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Abstract

Social networking sites provide a platform for sharing knowledge and information on issues of interest with wider audience. It facilitates interpersonal connection, community building, activism and development of diverse perspectives. Despite numerous beneficial aspects of social media platform, it may negatively affect women's participation and cause psychological harm to women. The impact of social media cannot be understand in isolation with social and cultural contexts and to facilitate an in depth understanding of its impact broader power structure that govern contemporary gender relations needs to be understand. The study aims to find out the pattern of use of social media platforms by rural and urban girls and women, assess the impact of use of social media on their daily life, family relationship, on mental and emotional health and analyse the victimisation of girls through social media, if any. It is survey type research and data was collected with the help of a self structured questionnaire. Random sampling technique was applied to select sample units and 200 women and girls, rural and urban both filled the questionnaire. Findings show that for majority of respondents both rural and urban, whatsapp is the most frequently used social media platform followed by YouTube. It facilitates new learning and helps in maintaining interpersonal relationship, however, many of the respondents show agreement with the negative influences of social media. They believe that it promotes unethical material deteriorating social norms, promoting gender stereotypes affecting gender relationship and creating confusion.

Keywords: Social media, women, girls, gender, use, impact

Introduction

Social media is a term used for internet sites and applications that can be used to present and share ideas, knowledge, feelings and content gathered or created by anyone. 'Social media is the interaction among people in which they create share or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks' (Govender et al., 2013).

'Social media depends on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss and modify user-generated content. They introduce substantial and pervasive changes to communication between organisations, communities, and individuals' (Pumper et al., 2011).

Social media includes pictures, text, videos, reactions or comments on posts by others as well as sharing links to information already available on various sites. Some of the popular social media platforms are Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn along with WhatsApp, YouTube, Tiktok, Telegram, Snapchat.

These platforms are totally different from regular media like T.V., radio, newspaper in terms of speed of reach and frequency. Social media platforms operate in a dialogic transmission system (from many sources to many receivers) while traditional media operate under a monologic transmission model (one source to many receivers). For instance, a newspaper is delivered to many subscribers (Pavlik & MacIntoch, 2015).

These sites are not only used by young generation but attraction towards it can be seen among people of all age groups. The connectivity among people through these sites helps them forming identities, feel supported, acknowledged and satisfied. It has revolutionised the way of expression of ideas, interpersonal communication and affected the way of thinking and behaving. It has far more deeper and powerful impact on youth and adolescents since their thought process may get easily influenced by others' ideology and actions. It provides a variety of information and educational resources, allowing youth to develop diverse perspective about any subject. How much amount of time spent on these platforms, the type of content they are exposed to along with some psychological factors, like their maturity level, personal life circumstances, including cultural, social and economic factors are responsible for shaping their minds.

Benefits of Social Media

This platform is a powerful tool for raising social awareness, encouraging activism, promoting positive causes and empowering youth to be change-makers in their communities. Additionally, the abundance of information available on these platforms transforms the way youth access knowledge, granting them an array of educational resources at their fingertips. The following are some of the examples where social media may be helpful for youth:

a. Positive experiences of social media include access to communities, social support and learning new information.

b. Social media helps keep people connected to friends and family locally and across the world.

c. Social media platforms allow sharing interests and activities, through text, videos, and images. This type of personal sharing on social media develops self identity, self expression and self affirmation.

d. Through providing more independence, social media can be a space to discover new ideas and knowledge. This is helpful to explore their interest.

e. It supports engagement in digital activism around topics of interest, from climate change to gun violence prevention and connect with an online community.

f. Youth can be benefitted by social media in the circumstances where they:

　1) Lack physical social support or they are lonely.
　2) Are going through a stressful situation.
　3) Have long-term medical conditions.
　4) Want to cope with challenging life situations and mental health conditions.
　5) Want to take part in moderated chat forums that openly encourage talking about personalised topics such as mental health.

Negative Effects of Social Media

Social media use also has negative effects. These are:

a. Social comparison or determining one's own worth is a common phenomena on social media platforms. Female users are sometimes advised to follow diet, join fitness training or get cosmetic surgery done to enhance their attraction. All these recommendations are influenced by norms and values attached to female beauty. Use of filters, cropping or editing, trying to edit profile pictures is associated with negative self-esteem that might promote one's negative and unrealistic body image.

b. Harmful content such as sexual abuse material, pornography, self-harm depictions, accounts selling illegal substances are found on social media platforms. The adolescent children might get engaged on these illegal platforms.

c. Sometimes they get into the contact of strangers, or trollers online who trap them into friendship and later blackmail them. Young girls get exposed to online predators, who might try to exploit or extort them which can raise the risk of mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression.

d. Activities demanding full attention especially during late night can delay sleep onset. It may also lead to psychological, emotional or physiological health hazards. Experts have reported that social motivations that cause young girls' late hour use of digital media may include fear of missing out, feeling of social accountability to engage in groups and conversations regardless of the time of day.

e. Digital Stress is another harm induced by frequent use of digital information technology. It is caused by constant access to a wide array of social content, and anxiety about approval. Young males and females feel pressure or guilty to be available to another person all the time and respond as quickly as possible to messages. It may lead to distraction from focus on studies, exercise, family and social activities.

f. In some cases youth may spread information that is biased or not correct or rumours or share too much personal information which may harm them personally.

The Anxiety and Depression Association of America has coined a new anxiety disorder caused by social media i.e. social media anxiety disorder. The symptoms of this disorder as suggested are:

a) Checking social media by stopping the conversation in the middle
b) Use of social media more than six hours per day
c) Justifying the amount of time spent on social media platforms
d) Decreasing interaction with family members and friends
e) Indifference towards studies, recreational or other activities
f) Feeling of anxiety, nervousness or stress when not able to check account on social media

Literature Review

Some of the studies conducted on the use of social media by adolescent girls and women and its impact on them are summarised in this section.

Lenhart (2015) found that a significant number of teenage girls remain engaged with social media, as 89% of teens between the age of 13–18 years in the US claimed to use it daily. While in India, of the overall number of people who use social media, 31% are teenagers (Statista, 2019).

Vogels & Watnick (2025) concluded that YouTube platform is the most commonly used platform by teens, as 95% of adolescents between the age of 13 to 17 years say that they have ever used it. According to this survey about two-third of teens reported using TikTok, followed by 62% use Instagram and 59% Snapchat. A small number of teens say that they have ever used Twitter (23%) and WhatsApp (17%). The study further revealed four positive experiences of social media viz. feeling of connectivity to what is going on in their friends' lives (80%), finding a place where they can show their creativity (71%), feeling of support from people in tough times (67%), and feeling of acceptance (58%). The study also reported negative experiences of social media since 38% of teens feel overwhelmed to see the drama on social media, 31% feel like their friends are leaving them out of things, 29% feel pressure to post content that will be followed by many comments and 23% reported that they feel worse about their own life after visiting social media sights.

Further study by Casares & Binkley (2021) inferred that connection, self-expression and entertainment are some of the benefits of social media while it can also negatively impact mental health as a result of body dissatisfaction, disordered eating patterns and increased anxiety and depression symptoms.

Similarly, Raffoul (2023) found exposure of content on social media platforms like videos and photos contribute to body dissatisfaction among adolescent girls. It can lead to eating disorders and serious physical and mental health issues, including suicidal behaviour.

Kleemans et al. (2016) observed that many girls feel pressured to edit their photos, altering their appearance to fit the idealized beauty on online platform. Similarly Chen et al. (2019) suggested that editing photos through using filters may be linked to the feeling of body

dissatisfaction and a desire to enhance the appearance with the help of cosmetics or cosmetic procedures.

The objective of the study conducted by Park et al. (2023) was to assess the usage and the impact of social media on women and girls, on gender equality, on democracy and civic participation. It was found that women across all age groups used social media platforms more than men. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, WhatsApp and Pinterest were more popular among women, while Twitter, LinkedIn, Reddit, Discord, Twitch and Telegram were more popular among men. The study revealed significant differences in type of social media usage between women and men. Men were more likely to share opinions, while women were generally more interested in maintaining strong social ties. Girls placed more importance on popularity and positive social experiences and felt the impact of negative interactions with others more than boys. Girls and women were more likely than boys and men to experience negative body image, sexual and gender-based abuse on social media.

Meier & Gray (2014) revealed that sexualized images are widely available on almost all the social media platforms including Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, and TikTok. Due to the increased use of social media by teenagers as a source of information and entertainment, they are constantly exposed to these images, which shape their perception of beauty and body ideals.

The study of Emamirizi (2016) aimed to determine the effect of using social networks on the academic achievement of 100 last semester students of Islamic Azad University, Izeh. They designed a questionnaire, used survey method and analysed data through one-way ANOVA. The results concluded that spending too much time on social networks causes fatigue in class and reduces hours of study affecting academic achievement of students.

The above review clearly demonstrates that the use and pattern of use of social media by girls and women have many implications on them. Since the use of social media by girls and women is increasing day by day and I could not find any research on it in Haryana, so felt a need to conduct a study on this topic.

Statement of the Problem

The use of social media is a massive passion among all today. This new social culture seems to have been accepted by almost everyone across all genders and age groups. The increase in the use of smart phones, ease in internet access and improved internet speed have made social media even more popular. It has become a necessity for exchanging messages and information between people and updating each other on happenings in their lives. While use of social media provides space to voice the experiences, a tool to educate, inform and groom the maturity level of youth, it also disturbs social life, deteriorates social norms, societal standards and ethics, perpetuates prejudices and sometimes becomes an obsession. With the widespread use of this digital technology, understanding its role in shaping social interaction and impacting young minds is essential. The present study is designed to find out the use of social media by women and girls in Haryana and its impact on different aspects of their personal and social life, as well as on their emotional and mental health.

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Research Method

Objectives of the Study

The study was conducted with the following objectives:

1. To study the pattern of use of social media platforms by women and girls in Haryana.
2. To understand the digital obsession of women and girls.
3. To assess the impact of use of social media on their daily life and family relationship.
4. To evaluate the impact of use of social media on mental and emotional health of women and girls.
5. To analyse the victimisation of girls through social media, if any.

Research Design

The study is exploratory and descriptive in nature and aims to find out the pattern of use and impact of use of social media platform on girls and women in Haryana. It is based on primary data for which field survey was conducted. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods were applied to infer the conclusion.

Sample

The sample was selected from all the six divisions of the state of Haryana. 10 districts from these divisions were randomly selected, these were: Kurukshetra, Karnal, Panipat, Yamunanagar, Kaithal, Jind, Jhajjar, Hisar, Faridabad and Mahendergarh. Random sampling method was applied to select the sample from these districts. The sample consisted of 200 girls and women, 100 from rural and 100 from urban areas. The age range of selected sample was 17 to 40 years.

Tool, Data Collection and Analysis

Survey, observation and group discussions were used to collect information from the respondents. Keeping in view the objectives a semi structured questionnaire was designed having a mix of close ended and open ended questions. Door to door survey was conducted and the respondents were contacted personally to provide detailed information. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analysis of data and the data was analysed with the help of simple percentages. The findings are interpreted with the help of tables and figures.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study are elaborated through the following sub heads:

1. Profile of Respondents

The results show that among rural sample 46 per cent respondents fall between 21-25 years followed by 41 per cent in 16-20 years age category, while among urban sample 44 per cent of them belong to 16-20 years age category and 19 per cent between 21-25 years. With regard to education majority of them both from rural (49 per cent) and urban (65 per cent) areas

are at least graduates. More than half of the respondents belong to general caste category. Among rural respondents 54 per cent belong to agriculturist family, while among urban respondents 38% respondents are from business family followed by 35 per cent from service class.
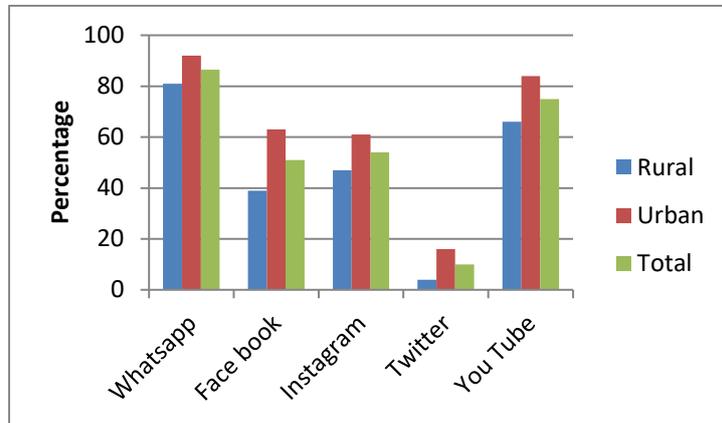
2. Use of Social Media Platforms

Fig. 1 Social Media Platforms used by Respondents

Findings indicate (Fig. 1) that out of total sample whatsapp is the most frequently used social media platform followed by YouTube, however there is difference between rural and urban areas with regard to use of these platforms. Whatsapp is used by 92 per cent urban women as compared to 81 per cent rural and 84 per cent urban and 66 per cent rural women were using YouTube. Further 71 per cent urban and 46 per cent rural respondents reported YouTube as the most favourite social media platform and 69 per cent urban and 41 per cent rural respondents reported whatsapp as the most favourite platform.

Table 1. Type of Post on Social Media Platform

Type of Post	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Text message only	30	30.0	22	22.0	52	26.0
Pictures and Text	64	64.0	78	78.0	142	71.0
Update Status	26	26.0	71	71.0	97	49.0
Video/Reel	26	26.0	52	52.0	78	39.0

*Multiple answers obtained

72 per cent respondents from rural and 84 per cent from urban area admitted to post the content on these sites and total 78 per cent respondents are in routine of posting content on any of these platforms. Table 1 reflects that in rural area 64 per cent and in urban area 78 per cent respondents post pictures and texts on their accounts. In urban area 71 per cent respondents are used to update their status daily and 52 per cent respondents make and post videos or reels on social media platforms. In rural area this percentage is only 26 per cent.

Table 2. Topic of Post on Social Media Platform

Topic of Post	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Personal Issues/Incidents	4	4.0	6	6.0	10	5.0
Family Issues/Incidents	17	17.0	24	24.0	41	20.5
Daily Activities	46	46.0	62	62.0	108	54.0
Accomplishments	4	4.0	16	16.0	20	10.0
Religious Activities	24	24.0	54	54.0	78	39.0
Political Issues	8	8.0	19	19.0	27	13.5
Emotional Incidents	12	12.0	9	9.0	21	10.5
Tours	34	34.0	59	59.0	93	46.5

*Multiple answers obtained

Topic of posts by respondents was also explored and it was found that the percentage of respondents making and posting videos of daily activities was the highest in both rural and urban areas. In urban areas this percentage was 62 per cent and in rural areas it was 46 per cent. In urban areas 59 per cent respondents post videos related to travelling and tours followed by 54 per cent post reels related to religious ceremonies. In rural areas 34 per cent of them capture and post travelling videos and 24 per cent religious videos. Besides these some of them also post reels related to personal, family, emotional, political issues as well as their accomplishments.
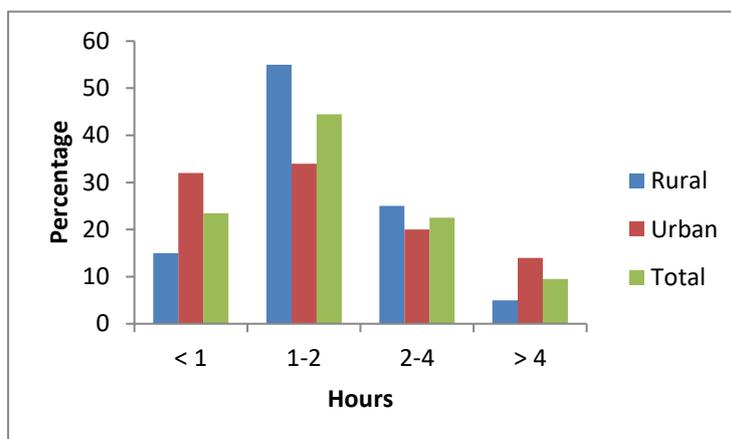

Fig. 2 Time Spent on Social Media Platform

It is very interesting to note that as compared to urban respondents rural respondents are spending more time on social media platforms. The findings (Fig. 2) show that 55 per cent rural while 34 per cent urban respondents spend 1 to 2 hours daily on it. 25 per cent rural and 20 per cent urban respondents are spending 2-4 hours and it is also noticeable from the results that 5 per cent rural respondents while 14 per cent urban respondents are spending upto 4 hours daily on these platforms.

Kira et al. (2019) posits that adolescents who spend more than 3 hours per day using social media may be at heightened risk for mental health problems, particularly internalising problems.

The findings also reflect that in urban area 52 per cent and in rural area 34 per cent respondents are doing late night browsing, indicative of their addiction towards social media. Late night browsing leads to physical and psychological tall on health of individual. It may contribute to worry, feeling of fatigue, change in pattern of appetite and sleep, headaches and emotional discomfort.

Frequency of uploading content on social media was assessed and the results indicate that more than half (51 per cent) of the respondents from rural area upload new content as and when they get time and 26 per cent upload the content weekly. In urban area 43 per cent respondents upload content once every day and 37 per cent whenever they get time to do it.

The respondents were also asked about the frequency of checking notification in a day and the results show that 56 per cent respondents from both rural and urban area do not check immediately after receiving the notification rather they check it whenever they get time. About 20 per cent respondents keep the notification muted. Only 14 per cent rural and 13 per cent urban respondents check their mobile notification immediately after getting it (Table 3).

Table 3. Frequency of Checking Notification

Check Notification	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Each	14	14.0	13	13.0	27	13.5
Intermittently	6	6.0	5	5.0	11	5.5
When Get Time	56	56.0	56	56.0	112	56.0
Middle of conversation/Task	4	4.0	5	5.0	9	4.5
Muted	20	20.0	21	21.0	41	20.5

Table 4. Preparation for Making Reels

Preparation	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Fitness	14	14.0	24	24.0	38	19.0
Dresses	39	39.0	51	51.0	90	45.0
Makeup	13	13.0	43	43.0	56	28.0
Hairstyle	24	24.0	42	42.0	66	33.0
Body Posture	51	51.0	69	69.0	120	60.0

*Multiple answers obtained

In both rural and urban areas women prepare themselves before making videos and clicking photos. It was seen that in rural area 51 per cent and in urban area 69 per cent respondents (Table 4) take into consideration their body posture before taking pictures or making videos, followed by 39 per cent rural and 51 per cent urban respondent dress up in beautiful manner to make pictures and videos more attractive. In rural area 24 per cent women

and girls consider hair style and 14 per cent consider fitness as essential component of preparation before making videos. In urban areas more than 40 per cent respondents focus on makeup and hair style and 24 per cent on fitness before making reel. Overall, it can be seen that body posture followed by dresses are the main focus while clicking photograph or making reels for uploading on social media. While hair style and make up are also considered important by many of the respondents.

3. Benefits of Use of Social Media Platform

The results depict that 98 per cent respondents from rural area and 88 per cent from urban area reported to be satisfied with their involvement or their activities on social media. They feel that they enjoy being active on social media. When the benefits of social media were discussed, many of the young girls said that it facilitates new learning and helps in their search for study material related to their studies. Many of them said that it helps in maintaining and enhancing interpersonal relationship. Some of them viewed that social media provides awareness about new trends of fashion, home decor, health & fitness, recipes, religious information and many more aspects while some opined that the videos available on social media sites increase awareness about political and international issues. Further helping in facilitating business is another benefit admitted by some of them during the group discussion.

Social media not only provides a platform to grab new information and knowledge but also enables women and girls to share their stories, experiences and views on a larger scale. Many of them feel that Face Book, Instagram and other such platforms help to campaign and support various causes through gathering followers. A similar study conducted by Park et al. (2023) maintained that social media can be used to promote the rights of women and girls through mass campaigns such as # Me Too.

One of the respondents said that she had seen reels on Face book challenging societal stereotypes and prejudices like the so called bad relationship between mother in law and daughter in law, daughter as burden on family, girl child discrimination etc. Such reels help others to alter their narratives and behaviour towards age old societal practices.

Another respondent opined that on social media many successful females have inspired many other women to pursue their ambitions by breaking traditional barriers and challenging gender norms. It has highlighted the women who have set examples of empowerment through bringing change into society.

Women becoming influencers, bloggers as well as content writers are shaping their image as bold, courageous and active in contrast to the traditional image of women as submissive and destitute. Social media is also bringing change in societal attitude towards women through representing women in leadership and decision-making roles (Lovelesh & Yadav, 2024).

4. Disadvantages of Social Media

Table 5. Disadvantages of Social Media

Disadvantages	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Disturbs Sleep	29	29.0	23	23.0	52	26.0
Disturbs Hunger	11	11.0	7	7.0	18	9.0
Creates Body Shaming	23	23.0	21	21.0	44	22.0
Disturbs Studies	46	46.0	39	39.0	85	42.5
Disturbs Domestic work	23	23.0	19	19.0	42	21.0
Disturbs Mental Peace	33	33.0	35	35.0	68	34.0
Creates Conflict in Relationship	41	41.0	47	47.0	88	44.0
Promotes Comparison	20	20.0	27	27.0	47	23.5

*Multiple answers obtained

The negative impact of social media platform was also assessed using both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis. Table 5 shows that 41 per cent rural and 47 per cent urban respondents admitted that spending time on it caused conflict in their relationship with children and other family members. Shekhawat & Bhatt (2021) proved that spending too much time on social media networks disturbs real life relationship of users. When more of the time and effort is consumed on the illusion of social media, the more important relationships with the loved ones and close family members start to suffer.

When it was further discussed, 46 per cent rural and 39 per cent urban respondents reported that it created distraction in their studies followed by 35 per cent urban and 33 per cent rural respondents admitted that waiting for comments on the posts, receiving few comments or negative comments disturbed their mental peace. They felt unhappy and stressed after uploading post on social media. It is also noticeable from the results that 26 per cent respondents out of total sample reported disturbed sleep due to their involvement on social media sites. The study by Park et. al. (2023) posited that women use social media slightly higher than men. Women are more interested to maintain social relationship and girls usually place importance on popularity and social experiences and feel more the impact of negative interactions with others than boys. The study also revealed that spending more time on social media is associated with an increase in depressive symptoms like lack of good sleep, low self esteem, online harassment and negative body image.

The findings indicate that nearly 24 per cent respondents out of total were used to compare their content or post with that of others, which caused stress to them. Moreover 22 per cent respondents out of total sample accepted that being active on social media platforms through posting images and videos created fear about their body image. They said that their post when received negative comments caused anxiety, fear and body shaming. Percentage of respondents expressing this feeling is 23 per cent in rural and 21 per cent in urban areas.

Social media relation to body image can be explained with the help of social comparison theory. The theory views that people evaluate themselves on the basis of similar others. It also says that people compare themselves to superior persons called as upward social comparison. Women's upward appearance comparison sometimes related to negative body image may have greater impact on their mental wellbeing. Women as compared to men are more likely to present idealised images of themselves on social media. Consequently women

on social media likely see these idealised images and compare themselves with these (Mango et al. (2008).

5. Victimization of Women

Table 6. Victimization of Women

Victimization	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Bullying	19	19	6	6	25	12.5
Hacking	36	36	14	14	50	25.0
Fake Profile	12	12	16	16	28	14.0
Morphing	6	6	2	2	8	4.0
Stalking	40	40	48	48	88	44.0

*Multiple answers obtained

The findings (Table 6) reflect that many of the respondents have been victimized on social media platforms. A large number of respondents i.e. 44 per cent out of total sample reported to receive obscene comments, vulgar messages and replies on their posts. Traditional masculinity which is synonymous to male dominance and control is manifested in the form of abusive behaviour towards females. The unequal power relations in our society influence violence and harassment against women by men. This marginalization of women is inherent and is shaped and justified by patriarchal norms, societal and cultural beliefs.

One fourth respondents' accounts were hacked and misused by some unknown person. There is more than double difference in percentage between rural and urban area with regard to it. 36 per cent rural and 14 per cent urban respondents accepted hacking. This is perhaps due to lack of awareness among rural young women about security features. 14 per cent respondents among total accepted to face the crime of creating fake profiles followed by 12.5 per cent respondents who were made victims of cyber bullying on social media platform. Few respondents (4.0 per cent) revealed that their photographs were misused on social media. When they were asked about the help they had taken to deal with such crimes, some of them admitted sharing it with friends and family members and a few of them approached cyber cell. Only 27.5 per cent respondents in total (39 per cent from rural and 16 per cent from urban sample) said that with the help of others or intervention of officials from cyber cell the matter was resolved, and at the time of study, no respondent reported pendency of complaint of victimization on social media.

Halder & Jai Shankar (2011) in their study found that only 35 per cent of the women reported about their victimization. They explained that if a woman is victimized, society blames the women itself for this victimization, which creates unpleasantness in her life. This abstain them from complaining or even sharing with others. It is considered a social stigma by the society. Furthermore due to the patriarchal nature of Indian society girls and women are taught to shun their voices out of fear of being stigmatised. Due to such nurturing practice women learn to ignore these issues.

6. Opinion regarding Impact of Social Media on Society

Table 7 Opinion regarding Impact of Social Media

Opinion	Rural		Urban		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Promotes positive social values and norms	42	42	34	34	76	38.0
Destruction of Indian cultural values	46	46	38	38	84	42.0
Promotes hatred/misogyny	13	13	16	16	29	14.5
Disturbs relationship	21	21	30	30	51	25.5
Spreads unnecessary confusion	55	55	31	31	86	43.0
Wastage of time	52	52	38	38	90	45.0

*Multiple answers obtained

The results (Table 7) indicate that 45 per cent respondents out of total admitted that visiting social media sites or sharing and posting content on it is sheer wastage of time and it is better to invest this time on some creative or intellectual work. They opined that it is very time consuming as when one starts exploring or viewing something, it becomes very difficult to exit. Numerous videos appear at a time on the screen and the person gets immersed into viewing them. He or she forgets that he has lost a lot of time. The percentage of respondents showing this view is higher in rural areas (52 per cent) as compared to urban areas (38 per cent). 43 per cent respondents viewed that social media spread unnecessary information and create confusion among people due to ambiguity of information available on it. It is also noticeable from the findings that 42 per cent respondents believe that social media is a means of destruction of social values. Unethical material produced on these sites is deteriorating moral and social values and it is also disturbing the life style, physical and mental health of young generation through producing obscene material, reducing physical activity and increasing screen time.

Some of the respondents both rural and urban cited that some social media sites create hatred which in turn deteriorates mutual understanding, trust and interpersonal relationship and also destroys social harmony. They feel that social media being influenced by western culture and tradition, propagates it among the Indians, it is disturbing the Indian cultural values and ideology. However 38 per cent respondents believe that social media promotes positive social values and norms.

It has also been observed that social media through delivering content sometimes reinforces gender stereotypes. Misogynist views of males pose a significant threat to women on social media. Further the unrealistic beauty standards portrayed on it contribute to a sense of inadequacy and inferiority among women. They put a lot of effort to adjust themselves to this visualisation of themselves.

Conclusion

Social media has integrated almost all the aspects of human life. It has the potential to act as a catalyst for positive change and empowerment of women. Social media shapes societal attitudes and helps gathering public opinion towards various issues. It also provides platform to promote campaigns. Despite of its many positive affordances, it has disproportionate harm on women and society at large. These harms include negative body imaging induced by comparison with so called idealised images of women and girls, gender based victimisation, deterioration of moral values and sometimes degradation of women. On the one hand it facilitates awareness, knowledge, information and skill, while on the other hand it induces biased perception, gender stereotypes and normative beauty standards for women and poses significant threat and challenge for society. Social media impacts mental wellbeing of the viewers as well, creating stress and anxiety, obsessive, addictive behavioural disorders and body dissatisfaction.

Both civil society and the government have to adopt a balanced approach for use and misuse of social media that maximises its benefits while minimising its adverse effects. Collaborative efforts are needed by the policymakers, legal experts, educators, techies and social organisations to create a safer and more equitable online environment. Then only the role of social media as a tool for empowerment of society may be assured.

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